



3-4 AHB Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 5

February 2006

BATTALION COMMANDER

To our Comanche Soldiers and Families,

A “great place” hello from the Comanche’s at Camp Taji to our families and Soldiers supporting our Nation’s mission and Operation Iraqi Freedom. CSM Long and I are simply amazed at the unity and communications from our Rear Detachment and Family Readiness Group spanning 2 oceans and 2 continents to our forward deployed Soldiers.

Our daily accomplishments are measured with the love and support seen regularly through the communications and care of our families and Soldiers either deployed, on Rear Detachment or those returned home for emergency leave. The constant connection achieved through email, mail and care packages brings a smile to every Soldiers face, and I highly encourage continued, regular contact via all methods. Care packages seem as bragging rights and really energize a Comanche smile when received. I ask you all to keep our single Soldiers in mind, and continue with your support as an extended family for them.

The Comanche Rear Detachment sustains our deployed force by rapidly answering any calls for help and care for our families in the United States. Also, by preparing our newly deploying Soldiers for the mission they are about to undertake. Romeo Company, under the leadership of CPT Dille and SFC Cruz, are the right leaders at the right time to ensure our deploying Soldiers are combat ready, trained and equipped. Keep up the great work!

Our deployed force is performing to the highest levels of expectations set by the leadership of the Combat Aviation Brigade and Division Command Group. Pride in effort, mission accomplishment and maintenance are readily evident during our daily combat operations. Our great Company Command Teams and Battle Staff leads from the front while accomplishing challenging missions that support our cherished ground forces and sustainment

forces. This includes flying near continuous operations that move Soldiers throughout Iraq to minimize American and Coalition Force travels from the potentially threatening conditions encountered during vehicle operations. Additionally, our team is an integral component of the combined arms fight against anti-Iraqi forces seeking to destabilize strategic objectives.

Morale is high, Soldiers are doing what they came into the US Army to do, and our leadership continues to provide the very best in support for them. Our re-enlistment mission, fueled by pride and monetary bonuses, is achieving super results. CSM Long and I want to retain every family and Soldier we can for our great Army. There is simply no better way of life than by serving our Nation the way you, your children, and spouses do. We remember and note every birthday and anniversary, as these are special occasions only missed by position, not time.

Our mighty D and E Companies continue to amaze me with their maintenance operations. This includes supporting our fleet of aircraft with POL operations, around the clock maintenance, and safety. Headquarters Company and the Battle Staff excel with synchronizing our operations and logistics requirements. Our stable of crew chiefs and warrant officers are setting the highest standards during tactical aviation operations with bravery and a “can do” attitude. And our dynamic medical team keeps our Comanche’s “warm and dry” during the “cold” spells spread periodically through the team.

I am pleased to announce that on 15 February 2006 the soldiers of our mighty Comanche Battalion officially became combat veterans as they receive their 4ID right shoulder sleeve insignia.

I thank all our families for supporting our great Soldiers and Family Readiness Groups, and encourage everyone to attend our monthly Rear Detachment briefings, and to provide family leave forms when they depart the Fort Hood area. My warmest regards and thanks to all...
Comanche Pride!

LTC Mike Gawkins,
Comanche 06

This 3-4 AHB newsletter contains official information and complies with the provisions of AR 360-81, AR 25-51, and Ft Hood's MOI for dissemination of newsletters.

The content of this newsletter has been screened and does not contain any classified material.

MICHAEL J. GAWKINS
LTC, AV
Commanding



Command Sergeant Major's "AO"

"Comanche Pride!" to all of our awesome Soldiers and families from Camp Taji, Iraq! What a remarkable time indeed it is to be able to give such a greeting thousands of miles away from "The Great Place – Fort Hood!" The Comanche battalion has certainly come full circle from its inception, only twelve short months ago, where we literally built this organization from the ground up, to a fully combat-ready forward deployed Air Assault helicopter battalion. You, the Comanche Soldiers, and our wonderful Comanche families, have so much to look back on and stand proud today supporting our nation's vision for a free, self-governing, democratic Iraq! LTC Gawkins and I could not be more proud of you all today when we see just how much we all have grown together as a team. "Simply amazing!"

I want the families "standing duty" back home to rest assured and know that your Comanche Soldiers are on top of their game and are providing the best aviation support to this war against terrorism in a way that only a Comanche can bring it to the fight! Your Soldiers are the best trained and best equipped to perform their mission and fulfill their duties than any other aviation unit in the Army today. The work that is being done on the front lines, utilizing our Blackhawk helicopters, is making an immense impact to the American and Iraqi Soldiers on the ground. This is being made possible by the best aviators, aircraft maintainers, petroleum supply specialists, ground vehicle support teams, and dedicated staff members that America's Army has to offer. The Comanche battalion is making a dedicated and tangible difference to building a stronger, more capable military and police force for the country of Iraq. In their doing so, they are leaving their irrevocable mark on history for the good people in this part of the world, and in return all Americans will reap the benefits of a region rid of terrorist and their threat to the international community.

Families and loved ones back home – "You are the foundation upon which these Comanches operate from." Your love and support reaches across the miles and fuels your Soldier to make these milestones happen everyday! I urge you to keep up the rock-solid support that you provide and sustain what your Soldiers are doing. This is made possible by open communication using the readily available internet and telephone service, and by those wonderful "care-packages" that you send. Please keep these meaningful and necessary acts of support coming. I also encourage you to stay plugged in to your company FRGs and utilize the Rear Detachment command team to resolve issues that may arise. We hear about all of the great things that are happening, by volunteers like you, to help take care of one another and allow your Soldiers to focus on the mission. These efforts that you selfishly provide to one another are so very much appreciated by me and the entire Chain of Command. In doing so, you make our jobs easier. My wife Joyce and I want to say, "Thank you, sincerely."

Again, I am so very proud of each and every Soldier and family member that makes this unit a "Great unit!" Continue doing what you do best. Have a safe 1st quarter in 2006. And remember my motto to keep you out of trouble..."Don't be Stupid!"

"COMANCHE PRIDE!"

CSM Bradley A. Long
Comanche 07



LTC Gawkins re-inlisting SSG Williams, SGT Stewart, SGT Holland, SPC Lee.



CSM Long helping out, turning some wrenches

Black Dragons

HQ CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

Greetings to all in the Black Dragon family. Our company has done and accomplished much in the past two months of our deployment. After arriving in Kuwait, the company conducted numerous pre-combat checks of equipment and personnel in preparation for our movement to IRAQ. Some of the training included small arms ranges, communication validation, equipment movement and inventory from the Port, and IED training. SGT Gonzales and the NCO's and soldiers of the S3 section quickly established our operations section and supported the battalion's air operations. The S6 section expertly set up our communication systems which enhanced our battlefield control. SPC Green, PFC Valdes, and PFC Vargas were instrumental in establishing the vital communications link between our ground and air equipment.

In late December the company moved from Kuwait to Iraq by both ground and air assets. Twenty Three Black Dragons provided 'convoy security escort' for the battalion's equipment while maneuvering for three days, over 350 miles to close in on our Forward Operating Base at Camp Taji. SPC Cruz, PFC Taajes, PFC Reed, and SPC Stanley, distinguished themselves by providing security and protection of their crews during the movement. The convoy security escort soldiers performed their mission superbly. The remainder of the company arrived at Camp Taji and immediately went to work establishing the Battalion area.

On a daily basis, the soldiers of HQ Company support the battalion's combat operations by providing 24 hour coverage in medical support, flight operations planning, logistical sustainment, intelligence collection, pickup/landing zone operations, command and control of all battalion air assault missions, digital/voice communications, sustainment, religious support, and life support for the battalion. Each staff section within the company contributes to accomplish a seamless synchronization of our Battalion's combat power. Our soldiers are truly amazing and they prove everyday that they are the best our country has to offer.

Our company celebrated the New Year By promoting SGT Hollars at midnight on January 1, 2006. Each month our company has an awards breakfast where we celebrate birthdays and promotions. Congratulations to the following soldiers on their well earned promotion: SGT Taylor, SPC Cruz, SPC Green, SPC Hernandez, PFC Bellu, and PV2 Leclerc. We congratulate SGT Pineada and PFC Bustos on their reenlistment and further commitment to the Army. These events are very significant and will directly contribute to the future of our great Army. The company also presented PFC Museau with a framed American Flag signifying our pride in her upcoming swearing in as a U.S. Citizen in Feb.

We have passed another milestone here and started sending our soldiers out on Environmental Leave. All of our soldiers will take Environmental leave during our deployment.

I would personally like to thank all of our families and loved ones for your support while your soldier is deployed to combat. The 1SG and I understand the sacrifices that all of our families are making and we, as the command team would like to express our gratitude to you. We understand the trust and confidence you place in us for the welfare of your soldier, and we continually work to uphold all expectations.

I am very proud of the accomplishments of this great company. We are accomplishing all missions set before us and making a difference here in Iraq. Thank you all for your unwavering support of our Company. Black Dragons!
CPT Steve Snyder
Black Dragon 6

Tomahawks

A CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

After a year and half of training, countless field exercises, National Training Center rotations, load out and inspections the Tomahawks arrived in Iraq. Finally we are able to implement what we have learned and trained for over the course of eighteen months. This is the first deployment of my career, and many others in the company as well, that allowed for a predictable deployment date. With few changes the deployment date arrived and the Tomahawks departed without the many pains associated with deploying. The exception was the very early show-times for our deploying soldiers. One day we will be able to deploy at a reasonable hour. One can hope; perhaps on our return.

We arrived in Kuwait with vigor, and immediately began to prepare for our movement north. The company completed reception, staging, on-ward movement, and integration training with precision and without incident. A CO was tasked to plan our movement north into Iraq. The brief, which was attended by 4ID senior leadership, set the standard for future air mission briefs in Iraq. Once again A CO became the vanguard and the standard for others to emulate.

A CO moved north to Taji, Iraq. What a difference a few years makes from our first tour to our second. The living conditions, to my amazement, are as briefed during the BDE FRG meeting in November 05. I can verify that the dining facility will challenge our waste lines, the gym rocks, our living trailers are great (better than sand and tents anyway), 3-4 AVNs MWR building provides phones, internet, ping-pong, several TVs, and the like, and our work areas are better than what we had at Fort Hood; all are very welcomed and appreciated amenities.

Although our living conditions are good this year, it will be a rough year for all of us. Rest assured I am doing everything possible to ensure the safety of our loved ones and aircrews. Together we have made it through a year and half of training, establishment of a new battalion, dozens of garrison field exercises and 30-day deployments, and hurricane relief (efforts). We will make it through this deployment together. Your Tomahawks are as safe as possible and we are executing our assigned missions with extreme professionalism. You should be very proud of your crewmember. I am.

Respectfully,

Chris Clyde
Tomahawk 06

Braves

B CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

Hello from Camp Taji, Iraq. It's been a busy two months...Since arriving in theater in early December, we have done everything from attending briefings to planning missions to conducting air assaults to fixing helicopters.

We spent a rainy Christmas in Kuwait and had a fabulous meal served by the division leadership. Although it was Christmas away from family and friends, it was great to be with the Brave family.

Our aviators attended briefs to learn of theater operating procedures and airspace familiarization. The outgoing unit did a tremendous job of bringing us up to speed in a very short time with area orientation flights and briefs. The pilots have been busy planning and flying missions in support of Multinational Division Baghdad. We were proud to promote WO1 McEyla to CW2 on 1 February.

The crew chiefs have been hard at work maintaining our aircraft and flying missions. They meet the challenge everyday and excel at every turn. Congratulations to SPC(P) Crook for outstanding performance at the February promotion board. We are proud to announce the following enlisted promotions effective 1 Feb: PFC Magna to SPC, SSG Frankenstein to SFC, SPC Jones to SGT and SPC Deuberry to SGT. In addition to him being are newest SGT, SGT Deuberry is the newest member of the Braves family.

We sent our first soldier on environmental leave on the 30th of January and our first officer will depart on leave in the next few days. There have been some questions about whether everyone will get environmental leave...everyone who deployed in December will get the opportunity to go on environmental leave.

I am very humbled to command such a great unit. Everyone should be very proud of our accomplishments as a unit. Each and every soldier in the unit makes the mission happen here on a daily basis. I want to thank everyone for supporting our soldiers and the FRG. It is not easy to be away from those we love, but it makes it much easier to know the support we get from those we leave behind.

CPT Rob Klarenbach
Brave 06



CW2 Mceyla, SFC Frankenstein, SGT Jones, and SGT Deuberry getting promoted

Warriors

C CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

February brings two months away from home. Time is going by quickly on this side of the world and at the rate we're going we'll be home in no time at all. The Warrior team has settled into the deployment groove and we are conducting Air Assault and Air Movement operations throughout Iraq. Our work supporting the ground troops is very important as every passenger we carry lessens their risk of travel by convoy.

A special congratulation goes out to SPC and Mrs. Jonathan Overton on the arrival of Jonathan W. Overton Jr, weighing in at 9lbs 4oz and 20.5" the newest member of the Warrior flight was born on 29 Jan 06.

Our aircraft are holding up great to the demanding pace of flying, though they are the oldest in the fleet it seems they are in the best shape. The crew chiefs did a great job preparing the aircraft in Kuwait and are doing amazing work here in Iraq maintaining them. Whenever possible the crew chiefs fly on their aircraft and the pride in ownership is evident. I'm sometimes in awe of the amount of new parts received and installed on the helicopters- they are in top condition.

Thank you very much for all of your support. 1SG's mail call is probably the best part of everyone's day. Whether a simple post-card or a large box of surprises something from home is always a great way to close out the evening. I encourage you to continue the great support that we've had so far. See you soon,
Warriors!

CPT Spencer Anderson
Warior 06



SFC Johnson training Iraqi soldiers on loading in a Blackhawk

Darkriders

D CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

The Darkriders have had an exciting few months. We have deployed into the CENTCOM theater of operations, trained up in Camp Buehring, Kuwait, and then pushed forward onto Taji, Iraq to begin taking over operational control of the maintenance for 4ID's air assault battalion.

As we look forward into the month of February we have finally settled into a definite rhythm, with plenty of work being done by all of our soldiers daily. We have two shifts, a day shift and a night shift of about 12 hours. Both shifts have exceeded the expectations of both the Battalion Commander and myself. In fact, our battalion leads the Brigade in operational rates, with the lion's share of the maintenance being done by none other than the Darkriders. All of our soldiers fill their work time with either fixing a broken aircraft or repairing small faults on our helicopters that do not stop them flying but are nice to have work.

The avionics shop has kept plenty busy, the new modifications and the constant use of all of our communications equipment have made them very valuable. Of course this makes a lot of work for the QC shop as they are hustling from aircraft to aircraft to inspect and sign off the repairs. Tech supply is challenged with keeping up with the constant in-flow of parts that are always showing up. Additionally, with all the excellent wrench turning happening, they have to turn in all the used parts, quite a task to continually track this 24-7.

Maintenance and shops are always gainfully employed. They are doing more than enough to keep their hands busy and working hard enough to sleep well at night. PC is hopping all the time managing all of the maintenance tasks that must be done, and pushing birds out to test fly and giving them back to the flight companies.

The living conditions here at Taji are fantastic. The soldiers are all working and living in portable trailers, no tents. Everyone has A/C and heat and if they have a TV they have access to AFN in their rooms. The dining facilities have almost anything you could hope for to eat and all the free Gatorade and soda you can drink. You could have a different meal every day for two weeks, there is so much to choose from. There are gyms and MWR facilities available for all the soldiers that have free internet and phone services so that our soldiers can stay in touch with their families.

We just recently received a new group of NCOs to the unit. We are happy to welcome SFC Jimenez, SSG Erdmann, SGT Spurgeon, and SPC(P) Deuberry to the D CO. team. Also, SGT Adkins, SPC Choi, and I have rejoined the unit after an initial absence and I couldn't be happier as we finally fill in some of our ranks.

The Darkrider team is doing fantastic. I am truly blessed to be in command of such a fine unit, made up of so many fine Americans. They continue to amaze me daily with their determination, strength, and attitude. Morale is high and we are all learning daily. A big thank you to all those families that continually support us and our mission as we accomplish our mission on the frontiers of freedom.

Sincerely,
CPT Buck Anderson
Darkrider 6

Important Numbers

Bde SDO **254-287-3541**

Rear D:

CPT Dille **254-553-2208**

1SG Cruz **254-287-3800**



D Co Soldiers on a Christmas day mail call

Warpath

E CO, 3-4 AVN, 4ID (M)

Well, Echo Company has already been deployed for more than two months. We understand that it may seem like an eternity for some of you, but the Soldiers have been so busy here that the days have literally been falling off the calendar. Every single Soldier is doing their part to ensure that 3-4 Aviation Regiment receives the absolute best support in order to carry out its wartime mission.

A major achievement by our Company was the completion of a three day ground assault convoy from Camp Beuhring, Kuwait to Camp Taji, Iraq. 28 Warpath Soldiers convoyed over 300 miles, creating some Christmas memories that they would never forget. In preparation for the mission, Echo Company completed vigorous training exercises and rehearsals for 3 weeks in Kuwait. Due to the intense train up, all the Warpath Soldiers arrived safely in Taji without any injuries or loss of equipment.

Several of the Echo Company warriors have taken the next step in their respective careers. We are proud to announce that SSG Agsaoay, SSG Perrault, SGT Allen, SGT Kosiavelon, and SPC Woodcock all reenlisted. We are also fortunate to promote eight Soldiers. Two well deserving soldiers have joined the Noncommissioned Corps: Sergeant Belknap and Sergeant Kosiavelon. PFC Bell and PFC Simpson were promoted to SPC. PV2 Armes, PV2 Calaf, and PV2 Taylor were all promoted to Private First Class and Private McLaughlin has moved up the enlisted career chain to PV2. The dedication and service exemplified by these individuals during this time of war has never been more apparent.

I am proud to announce that the ground maintenance section has the highest Organizational Readiness rate in the entire Combat Aviation Brigade. Our dynamic mechanics have replaced many engines, transmissions, and fly-wheels, performed many services, and numerous other jobs to date. This is a direct reflection of the outstanding work ethic displayed by our Motor Pool.

The official "NASCAR pit-crew" of 3-4 Aviation, the mighty POL Platoon has pumped a phenomenal amount of fuel in our first 30 days of assuming the mission. Sergeant First Class Laffin (that's 2 F's) runs a well-oiled machine that is setting the standard across the Brigade.

We are very proud to announce the arrival of the two newest members to the Echo Company family: Bridger Thomas Alexander Lee and Evelyn Neddo. Congratulations to the Lee and Neddo families.

The morale of Echo Company here at Camp Taji is off the chart. The living conditions are awesome compared to the last time some of our seasoned veterans were deployed to Iraq. The dining facilities offer up to four meals a day (not to include the 2 AM Super Bowl XL banquet). The chow offered is very appetizing thanks largely in part to the hard work put forth by our food service specialists. The living quarters for all Soldiers come equipped with beds, optional Internet access, and 8 channels of high-quality Armed Forces Network TV programming. The Battalion is very fortunate to have its own MWR center complete with telephones, Internet café, pool table, ping pong table, and two 30" televisions. Although nothing can replace the comfort offered by our loved ones back home, if you must be, deployed, Camp Taji is definitely the place to be.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one of you for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers. I firmly believe that the sacrifices made by you and your Soldier is for a just and noble cause. We support a combat effort that will one day help bring an end to terrorism and evil in this world. Keep sending those letters and care packages, the Soldiers really appreciate it as evidenced by their crowding of the orderly room every day during mail call. Your Soldiers are doing great, safe, and will be home as soon as our job is done.

CPT Roger Wayne
WARPATH 6



SFC Laffin and SGT Ayala ready to move North

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

3rd Battalion, 4th Aviation
4th Infantry Division (M)
Fort Hood, Texas 76544

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